



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

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NATIONAL ELK REFUGE MANAGERS BEGIN SUPPLEMENTAL FEEDING PROGRAM

National Elk Refuge managers announced that supplemental feeding for wintering wildlife on the Refuge began Monday, January 16. Biologists have been closely monitoring conditions and elk distribution to determine the start date for the feeding program which generally begins in late January. Approximately 5,000 elk are currently on the Refuge.

The elk are fed alfalfa pellets which measure 5/8 – 3/4" in diameter x 2" long and are high in protein. Each elk eats approximately seven to eight pounds of pellets per day, depending on conditions. The National Elk Refuge conducts the feeding, furnishes the equipment and shares equally in the cost of the pellets through a cooperative agreement with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Presently, it costs an average of \$2,720 per day to feed 20 tons of alfalfa pellets to 5,000 elk, bringing feed costs to approximately \$200,000 each year, or \$40 per elk. The elk are fed alfalfa pellets an average of 75 days each winter.

In addition to elk, biologists have recently counted 945 bison wintering on the National Elk Refuge. The Jackson bison herd has been growing 10 –14% each year since 1990. Bison impact the supplemental feeding program by consuming an additional 700 tons of feed per season, totaling approximately \$97,000.

In some years, a portion of the feed has been contributed to the Refuge by the Jackson District Boy Scouts with revenues derived from their annual antler auction held each May. Three Challenger tractors currently used in the supplemental feeding program have been purchased for the National Elk Refuge with help from the local Boy Scouts of America.

Travelers on U.S. 26/89/191 and the Elk Refuge Road should use pullouts to improve roadway safety when viewing or photographing elk. Sleigh rides onto the Refuge to closely view wintering wildlife are also available to the public at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center located at 532. N. Cache Street in Jackson. For more information on National Elk Refuge sleigh rides, call (307) 733-5386.

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www.fws.gov/nationalelkrrefuge
